

In-Delta Storage Program

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Environmental Evaluations

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Background

- Delta Wetlands Project performed much environmental work to comply with CEQA/NEPA and to receive permits
- The CALFED Bay-Delta Program Record of Decision contains environmental commitments for carrying out CALFED Projects
- DWR has updated surveys and information, and working to meet CALFED commitments



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Areas Evaluated

- Land Use
- Special Status Plants
- Wildlife
- Recreation
- Cultural Resources
- Hazardous Materials
- Aquatic Resources



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Land Use

- Proposed project converts about 11,000 acres from agricultural use.
- CALFED commitment is to minimize effects to agriculture consistent with meeting CALFED goals.
- Investigating acquiring easements to protect agricultural uses



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Special Status Plants

- Surveys conducted spring through fall 2002.
- 111 occurrences of special plant types were found on exterior of levees; none in interior.
- Mitigation will include avoiding, relocating or compensating at habitat islands.



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Wildlife

- Surveys conducted for giant garter snake, western pond turtles, Swainson's hawk, greater sandhill cranes, black rails, tricolored blackbirds, burrowing owls and bats.
- Mitigation includes avoiding, relocating, replacing habitat at the habitat islands or elsewhere.
- Habitat Management Plan may be revised to mitigate for impacts as project design is detailed and more survey results come in.



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Recreation

- Public recreation will be included in the project and aimed at meeting unmet recreational demands in the Delta.
- At reservoir islands, opportunities include bank fishing.
- At habitat islands, opportunities include hiking, biking, bird watching, and hunting; activities need be compatible with habitat goals.



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Cultural Resources

- A Historic Property Management Plan has been prepared pursuant to an agreement required by the National Historic Preservation Act.
- Data recovery and additional surveys will be conducted.



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Hazardous Materials

- A Site Assessment identified contaminated sites at past vehicle and equipment maintenance areas.
- Additional work will be done to delineate and remove or treat contaminated soils.



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Aquatic Resources

- Nine listed or sensitive fish species could be affected by the project; state-of-art fish screens are included in the project, operating rules are in place to protect the species, and consultations with fishery agencies will be held to achieve endangered species acts compliance.
- Some shallow water habitat will be affected by levee work. Additional work is needed to analyze and mitigate the impact once levee designs are refined.



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Habitat Islands

- The purpose of the habitat islands is to mitigate for habitat lost at the storage islands.
- Habitats will include wildlife friendly agriculture, wetlands and riparian.
- Current estimates are that habitat values gained at habitat islands exceed mitigation requirements.
- As project design is detailed, the Habitat Management Plan may need to be adjusted.



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Next Steps

- Future project studies would involve additional CEQA/NEPA and permit compliance work.
- Agency, stakeholder and public input will be solicited in the process.
- CEQA/NEPA draft public review document is targeted for release in 2005.

